

Stepping Stones Pre-School



Welcome back...

We hope you all enjoyed a lovely half term break, it's lovely having the children back with us!

Staff news...

We are very fortunate to have Janna Bartles volunteering for us on a Thursday. You may have already met Janna as she looks after one of the children who attends Stepping Stones, but would like to gain some experience working with the English curriculum. Please help us to make Janna feel welcome!

We will also be having 2 students come to Stepping Stones who are doing the Early Years Initial Teacher Training, which I completed last year. The students, Kathryn & Lai are already working in settings themselves but need to gain further experience with children aged 2-3years in order to successfully complete their training. We look forward to welcoming them to our setting and working with them to improve our practice.

Did you know that as part of our ongoing professional development at Stepping Stones, staff regularly attend training to develop our knowledge and expertise within Early Years? Many of these courses and meetings take place during the evening or on Saturday's, thank you to all our staff who are exceptionally dedicated to give up their time to do this. The Spring Term is always busy with training as now most of the children have settled, we are thinking about how to move their learning on in more specific ways. I recently attended on improving boys attainment, particularly around Literacy. This was a really useful course, and I will be building some of my knowledge into the upcoming workshops we have in the Spring and Summer terms. I also attended some training on the impact of parental mental health, which was absolutely fascinating and reinforced why attachment for our young children is so important, children need to feel secure in order to be able to learn. Again, we will discuss some of this key information in the workshops. Julie has attended training on Maths in the Early Years and gave the staff some really exciting ideas to spark the children's imagination in interesting and unusual ways about Maths. Check out our most recent Facebook post with the frogs, which was inspired by Julie's course. Michelle has attended training on children's assessments, we assess the children in their learning each term to make sure that we know where the children are and what we need to do to help them achieve their next steps in learning. Michelle has come back with some great tips on how to make sure our observations are really focussed to inform these assessments. Charlotte & Nives attended the termly Special Educational Needs Coordinator Network meeting, they got some really helpful information on making referrals to outside agencies and specialists which will support us in making sure we are accessing the right help for all of our children. So our inset days have been jam packed with information to help us support all your children in their learning.

Questionnaire...



As a committee run Pre-School, parents views are at the forefront of what we do. We are sending out a questionnaire (online), and we would love for as many of you as possible to tell us what you think about Stepping Stones. We have kept the questionnaire short, and it really only takes 5 minutes so please do take this opportunity to tell us what you think. Please find the link to the online questionnaire, in the newsletter email and fill it in by Friday 11th March.



Thank you/reminders & requests

Tissues...

Please remember to bring in some boxes of tissues for us, we are running particularly low at the moment.

Middle Gate...

If you are arriving 'late' after a member of staff has left the gate, please ensure the you shut the middle gate after you leave. There have been instances where the gate has been left open and this poses the risk that children may wander into the nature garden unsupervised.



Eggs to hatch...

Next week we have some very 'egg-citing' visitors!! We are having eggs delivered to Stepping Stones and hatching some chicks! We are so excited about the learning opportunities that this will bring for the children on the lead up to Easter. The chicks will be with us **Monday 29th February-Friday 11th March**. The chicks will be in the annexe, so please ensure that you are with your child as you come in to hang up their belongings during drop off and pick-up (rather than letting them run on in without you) so that we can make sure the chicks don't get frightened!



Special Person week...

We recognise Mother's Day by having a Special Person day. Anyone who is special to your child is invited in to come for a play, read a story to the group or play with the chicks. Any time or session, week commencing 7th March, please let a member of staff know if someone will be coming to join us, and if you would like to read a group story please let us know in advance so that we can organise time and space.



World book day...

Come & celebrate World Book Day on **Wednesday 9th March** (the official WBD is Thursday 3rd March) with us by dressing as your favourite book character & listening to stories with an author, Zerha Hicks who has written 'The Boy Who Hated Toothbrushes' £4.50 & 'All Mine' £4.99. Parents and non-Wednesday children are very welcome and if you would like to come along please arrive at 11am. This has been organised with the help of Regency Book Shop, our fabulous local book shop on Surbiton High Street, who will be selling a selection of books, and both of these books will be offered at a discounted rate. We will also be giving out World Book Day money off tokens next week (29/2/16), which Regency Book Shop will accept. This was a fantastic event last year and definitely one you won't want to miss, put it in your diary! In the Summer term (April) we are having a visit from the dental health nurse who visited us last year, so this is a great book to support the children's learning. Please note Zehra Hicks' books will be offered at a discounted rate & therefore WBD tokens cannot be redeemed against those books.

Toddler Time...

This terms Toddler Time sessions will be taking place week commencing **14th March**. Please sign up for a session to come and see the small group work we do at Stepping Stones, and take the opportunity to meet up with other parents too! Sign up sheets will go up one week before Toddler Time.

Behaviour Management workshop...

We are hosting a workshop on how to support children's behaviour. **Thursday 17th March** at 7.30pm, please see the attached leaflet for further details.



Easter Egg Hunt...

Thursday 24th March... more details to follow.



A focus on child development at home...

Would you like to know more about how your child is developing and what you can do to help at home? The Government have produced this fantastic guide: 'What to expect and when'. The link to the document is here:

http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2015/09/4Children_ParentsGuide_Sept_2015v4WEB1.pdf

As we observe your children and plan for their next steps in learning, these are the kind of behaviours and activities we are looking for from children. You can really help us move your children's learning forward by using our 'WOW' board, as I'm sure you have seen children can behave very differently at home than they do at pre-school! So please help yourself to a post it and let us know what has made you say WOW. We then take a copy of your observations and include them with our own to use when we plan next steps, to make it as accurate and as personal to your child as we can. If you would like to borrow a hard copy of the document, please let us know.

What to expect, when?
Guidance to your child's learning and development
in the early years foundation stage



What we're learning at Stepping Stones...

Personal, Social and Emotional development	Communication & Language
<p>We have been learning to take turns by playing small group snap games & encouraging the children to do this without the help of an adult.</p> <p> Play a small snap game at home making sure that mummy and daddy get a turn.</p>	<p>We have been learning how to differentiate between quiet and loud sounds by playing 'monkey is lost in the jungle'.</p> <p> Try our 'hot' and 'cold' game by hiding a toy and give clues to your child about how close they are by saying 'cold' quietly and gradually get louder as they get closer by saying 'hotter'.</p>
Physical development	Literacy
<p>We have been using our pincer grip to make marks with fruit tea bags to support with early writing skills. The fruit tea adds a sensory element to interest children who may not be interested in picking up a pencil.</p> <p> Allow children to squirt soap and make marks in it on the side of the bath.</p>	<p>We have been using the magnetic letters to encourage the children to begin to learn letter shapes.</p> <p>Encourage the children to recognise familiar words such as 'Sainsbury's' or the writing on your 'Weetabix' cereal box. </p>
Mathematics	Understanding the world
<p>Learning about recognising numerals and learning to count 0-10 with 5 little speckled frogs.</p> <p> Notice the numbers in your environment- numbers on the TV remote, the number on your front door etc.</p>	<p>The children have been interested in the frosty weather and how ice melts, so we have recreated this inside allowing children to explore ice and how things change.</p> <p>Put ice cubes in drinks at home to watch how they melt and make things colder! </p>
Expressive Arts and Design	<p> = Ideas for learning you can extend at home</p>
<p>We have been having birthday parties in the role play area and making pretend play-doh cakes.</p> <p> Play cafes at home and allow children to pretend play with you.</p>	

Best wishes, Sarah & the Stepping Stones Team